

Amos Arthur Birkby

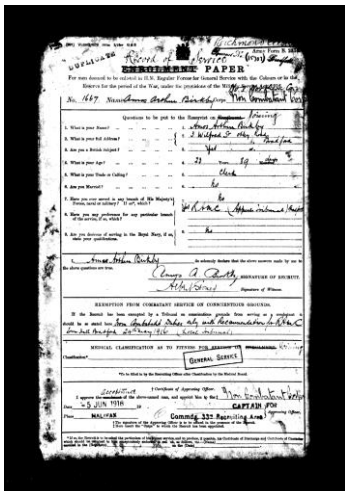


Amos Arthur Birkby was born on 8th March 1893. He lived at 3 Wilfred Street on Otley Road in Bradford and was the eldest son of Harry and Francis Birkby. Before the war he worked as a Junior Clerk at a timber merchant. He was a religious man; he was a Methodist Lay Preacher at Eastbrook Hall in Bradford which was once described as the 'Methodist Cathedral of the North'. He was 21 in 1914 when war broke out. This is a photo of Amos in Aberystwyth from 1918.

Source Mrs Ravenscroft

In 1916 when he was 'called up' to become a soldier, he claimed exemption. This means he said he could not fight due to his religious beliefs; he believed that the Bible teaches that it is wrong to kill.

At a local tribunal he requested a CO exemption and asked to join the Royal Army Medical Corps. He was sent to the Northern Non Combatant Corps, where he was assigned to the Medical Corps. It may be that Amos refused to do the work they asked of him (meaning he refused orders), because we know that in 1917 he was put on trial and court martialled. He was sentenced to 112 days imprisonment in Wormwood Scrubs and later transferred to Dartmoor prison where he joined a work gang that built roads.



This is a picture of Amos' Non-Combatant Corps record; it says he is recommended for the Royal Army Medical Corps. But he possibly refused and was sent to do hard labour instead.

What would you do?

Source www.ancestry.co.uk

Would you have joined the Non-Combatant Corps?

Was it fair that these men had to do hard labour?

How do you think they were treated by other people?

Towards the end of the war he was then sent to South Wales and remained there after the war. In 1918 he married Esther Hannah Pearce in Llandovery and set up his own timber merchants. He moved back to Bradford in 1928 and after his wife sadly died in 1941, he remarried Edith McCann. His family believe that the 'Conchie' label affected Amos; he struggled for many years to gain long-term employment because for some felt as he didn't fight for his country he didn't deserve a job.



Source Peace Museum UK

Do you think COs were cowardly or courageous?

Was it brave to say 'No!' when so many people said 'Yes!'?

How are COs remembered now?

Has this changed over time?

Amos, like the Burrows brothers, is also buried at Undercliffe Cemetery. You can see here that he is buried with other family members.

Should Amos be remembered for his courage to say no in 1916?

With gratitude to Mrs Ravenscroft, daughter of Amos, for her kind assistance in piecing together his story.